

by Tech. Sgt. Lisa M. Zunzanyika



Tyndall Air- men cheer

as one of their F-15s takes off for a night mission during William Tell 2004 at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. The scenario consists of an aircraft crossing a designated boundary and teams on the ground receiving scramble orders to launch and intercept. Teams are judged on response times and how fast they relay information on the aircraft to William Tell officials.

Duel Over the Gulf

William Tell: intercepting drones, Noble Eagle homeland defense aircrew scramble — and more

by Tech. Sgt. Kevin J. Gruenwald

Eight years have passed since fighter pilots last “locked on” to “enemy” targets and duelled in the skies over the Gulf of Mexico during a William Tell exercise.

The Air Force’s many global commitments contributed to the exercise’s hiatus. However, the 50th anniversary of the air-to-air event was worth the wait.

“Most of us work in a competitive environment, but seldom actually get to experience the nerves and pressure associated with true competition,” said Capt. Travis Hazeltine of the 19th Fighter Squadron, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska. “William Tell gives

you a chance to experience that and the opportunity to perform accordingly.”

Pilots, weapons loaders and maintainers from four major commands and the Air National Guard went to Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. — the “Home of Air Superiority” — to compete. There, judges tested and evaluated aircrews on their ability to perform under combat conditions. Participants competed for points in five aircrew flying profile scenarios ranging from live-fire exercises pitting the F-15C against an MQM-107E subscale drone to an Operation Noble Eagle homeland defense no-notice aircrew scramble.

While William Tell highlighted air-to-air combat maneuvers, pilots couldn’t launch without support crews. On the ground, maintainers, weapons directors and bomb loaders demonstrated their skills — keeping jets flying and loaded in record time and earning coveted points toward team totals.

Every Airman worked toward the same goals:

showcase unit pride, represent the respective command and base and, of course, take home the trophy.

The teams at this year’s competition were the 71st Fighter Squadron from the 1st Fighter Wing, Langley Air Force Base, Va. (Air Combat Command); 95th Fighter Squadron from the 325th Fighter Wing, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. (Air Education and Training Command); 123rd Fighter Squadron from the 142nd Fighter Wing, Portland Air National Guard Base, Ore.; 19th Fighter Squadron from the 3rd Fighter Wing, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska (Pacific Air Forces); and the 493rd Fighter Squadron from the 48th Fighter Wing, Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England (U.S. Air Forces in Europe).

Pacific Air Force’s 19th Fighter Squadron “Gamecocks” — with their souped-up F-15C Eagles — beat the competition and took the team trophy back to Elmendorf. The squadron’s Capt. Pete Fesler was awarded the Top Gun trophy, and the unit was recognized as the top weapons load team. ✪

by Master Sgt. Robert W. Valencia



Oregon Air National Guardsman Master Sgt. Frank Stevens, 142nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, cleans the canopy of his F-15C. The canopy is made of several layers of transparent plastic that helps keep pilots safe while traveling at two and a half times the speed of sound at altitudes as high as 50,000 feet. The 142nd took home the Chief Master Sgt. Arvol "Pete" Lusse trophy as the exercise's top maintenance team.

Senior Airman Nick Hofmann, 493rd Fighter Squadron, Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England, conducts a post-flight exhaust inspection on an F-15C. Inspectors look closely for cracks, tears or abnormalities on surface areas of the aircraft.

by Staff Sgt. Colette Bennett



by Tech. Sgt. Ben Bloker



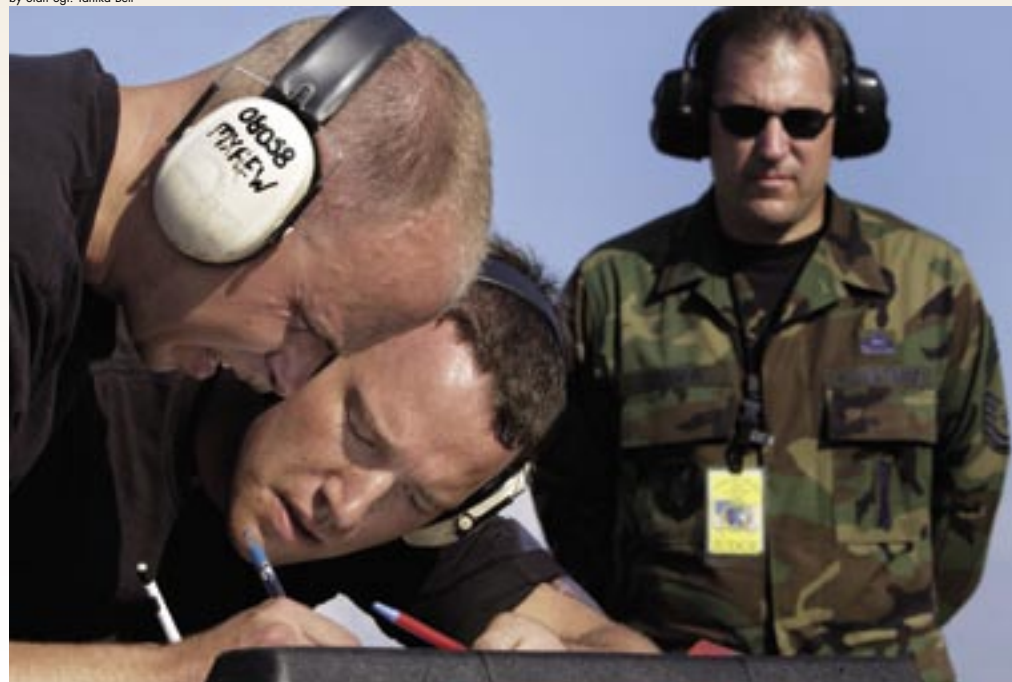
Staff Sgt. Jalussee Samuel, a crew chief assigned to the 71st Fighter Squadron, Langley Air Force Base, Va., eagerly watches her teammates as they perform a static weapons load. Judges deduct points for deviations, violations in explosive safety, technical order compliance, unreliable system or munitions, ground safety or competition rules.

Weapons loaders Senior Airman Mike Raimondo, Staff Sgt. Jacob Watson and Airman 1st Class Joseph Ragadio with the 71st Fighter Squadron, Langley Air Force Base, Va., carry an AIM-9M missile during the static weapons load competition. Each team was authorized one three-member crew to participate in the competition, which included two static munitions loads.

by Tech. Sgt. Ben Bloker



by Staff Sgt. Tanika Bell



Staff Sgt. Kevin Skaggs and Airman 1st Class Matt Baker, both assigned to the 95th Air Maintenance Unit, review weapons documentation as Chief Master Sgt. Mike Cannon, a judge from Headquarters Pacific Air Forces looks on. The judges are responsible for sending scored information forward to the tabulation and verification office at William Tell, which in turn tabulates, verifies and posts all recorded data.

by Tech. Sgt. Ben Bloker



An F-15C Eagle pilot from the 493rd Fighter Squadron, Royal Air Forces Lakenheath, England, moves into position to launch an AIM-120A missile at a sub-scale drone during a live-weapons fire exercise over the Gulf of Mexico. This profile closely resembles a wartime scenario when a "first shot" fails to bring down the enemy and a second shot is required.